

key authorities that aid management of energy emergencies, specifies the conditions under which the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve can be used, and updates the operating rules for the Weatherization Assistance Program.

The Act reauthorizes the operation of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a critical line of defense against the threat of energy shortages that can cripple our economy. Extension of the direct authority for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve guarantees that the full range of means will be available to any Administration that may need to take actions necessary to secure our Nation's energy supplies.

The Act also restores the limited antitrust protection for U.S. oil companies assisting the Department of Energy and the International Energy Agency in planning for and responding to an oil emergency. With this protection, these companies can continue their vital participation in preparing and implementing a coordinated and effective response.

As I also requested, the Act provides authority to establish and use a Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve with a capacity of up to 2 million barrels. This Reserve will serve New England and the upper Mid-Atlantic States where consumers rely to a great extent on heating oil to heat their homes. Creation of the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve was a priority of my Administration, and I am pleased the Congress provided bi-partisan support for its inclusion in this Act.

The Act also amends the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program, a program that reduces heating and cooling costs for low-income Americans by improving the energy efficiency of their homes. These changes will make it easier for States to provide timely energy weatherization services and include a repeal of a financially burdensome cost-sharing requirement for the States.

Unfortunately, this Act also contains an objectionable provision that transfers licensing authority for small hydroelectric projects in Alaska from Federal jurisdiction to the State of Alaska. I remain strongly opposed to this provision because it could erode the Federal Power Act's uniform system for licensing hy-

droelectric projects in the United States and impair the Federal Government's ability to protect Federally managed resources.

The Act also amends the President's existing authority, under section 161(h) of the Energy Policy and Conservation Act, to draw down the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by making exercise of the authority dependent upon a finding by the Secretary of Defense that the drawdown would not impair national security. This amendment is objectionable because, in effect, it conditions the exercise of judgmental authority by the President upon the agreement of one of his subordinates.

Despite these objectionable features, I believe that the Act demonstrates this Nation's and my own commitment to providing for a more secure energy future, and I am pleased to sign it today.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 9, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2884, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-469. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Signing the Energy Act of 2000

November 9, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign the "Energy Act of 2000," which contains a number of measures to strengthen America's energy security that I have repeatedly urged Congress to act on this year. This legislation reauthorizes the operation of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a critical line of defense against the threat of energy shortages, and guarantees that a full range of tools will be available to secure America's energy supplies. In addition, this legislation establishes an appropriate trigger for the use of the 2 million barrel Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve that I directed my administration to establish earlier this year. This will help provide an insurance policy against supply shortages and price spikes in winters and assist consumers who rely on heating oil to heat their homes.

The act also makes changes in the Weatherization Assistance Program to reduce State costs and better serve low-income Americans.

NOTE: H.R. 2884, approved November 9, was assigned Public Law No. 106-469. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on the Dedication of the National Japanese-American Memorial

November 9, 2000

Earlier today America honored the patriotism of Japanese-Americans during World War II with the dedication of the National Japanese-American Memorial in the Nation's Capital. Attorney General Janet Reno and Commerce Secretary Norman Mineta joined distinguished members of the Japanese-American community and Americans of all ancestries in reminding us of a time when this country lost sight of the very foundations of democracy it was defending abroad.

This Nation must never forget the difficult lessons of the Japanese-American internment camps during World War II and the inspirational lessons of patriotism in the face of that injustice.

Today I have directed the Secretary of the Interior to develop recommendations to preserve existing internment sites and provide for their public interpretation. In addition, I am signing legislation designating the United States Federal Courthouse for the Western District of Washington in Seattle, Washington, as the William Kenzo Nakamura United States Courthouse. William Nakamura was a student at the University of Washington when he and 120,000 other Japanese-Americans were removed from their communities and forced into internment camps. Despite the injustice of his internment, William Kenzo Nakamura volunteered for the U.S. Army and died fighting for this country in Italy on July 4, 1944. In June of this year, I posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor in recognition of his courage and heroism.

As the Nation prepares to honor its veterans, it is my hope that the unique contribu-

tion of Japanese-Americans to preserving this Nation's freedom and democracy remains a vital part of America's history.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000

November 9, 2000

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4864, the "Veterans Claims Assistance Act of 2000." The Act reaffirms and clarifies the duty of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to assist claimants in developing evidence pertinent to their claims for VA benefits. It eliminates the previous requirement that a claim be well-grounded before VA's duty to assist arises. The Act requires the Secretary to make reasonable efforts to assist a claimant in obtaining evidence to substantiate his or her claim unless it is clear that no reasonable possibility exists that the Secretary's assistance would aid in substantiating the claim. As under current law, the Secretary must consider the entire record of evidence, and when there is an approximate balance of positive and negative evidence regarding an issue material to the determination of a matter, the Secretary must give the benefit of the doubt to the claimant.

Veterans seeking benefits from this Government are deserving of all reasonable assistance that VA has to offer. The benefits administered by the Secretary are a means by which the Nation expresses its profound gratitude for the many sacrifices our veterans have made to protect and defend our freedom. Veterans Day, a day set aside to honor all veterans, is an especially appropriate time for us to ensure that we will continue to pay our debts to these men and women. This Act demonstrates to veterans and to all those currently serving in our military and to those who may serve in the future, that America honors its commitments to those who have served. I am very pleased to approve this new law.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
November 9, 2000.